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Letter dated 5 September 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a concept note (see annex) on the Arria formula open meeting on the theme "Syrian voices on preventing a deathtrap in Idlib", to be held from noon to 1 p.m. on Friday, 7 September 2018, in Conference Room 7 at United Nations Headquarters. The meeting will be co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of France, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Karel J. G. **van Oosterom**
Ambassador
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Annex to the letter dated 5 September 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Concept note for the Security Council Arria formula open meeting on the theme "Syrian voices on preventing a deathtrap in Idlib", to be held on Friday, 7 September 2018, co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of France, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations

Objective

1. Highlight the dire humanitarian situation in Idlib and the possible consequences of a further military escalation and provide Syrian voices with a platform to inform an international response.

Background

2. In his statement on 29 August 2018, the Secretary-General expressed deep concern about the growing risks of a humanitarian catastrophe in the event of a full-scale military operation in Idlib Province and urgently appealed to the Government of Syria and all parties to exercise restraint and to prioritize the protection of civilians.

3. In a statement on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator to the Security Council on 28 August, the Security Council was called on "to avoid any further escalation of violence and an ensuing humanitarian catastrophe"; a "worst-case scenario in Idlib will overwhelm capacities and has the potential to create a humanitarian emergency at a scale not yet seen through this crisis".

4. While Idlib is the last of the de-escalation zones agreed upon in Astana by Russia, Iran and Turkey, it is today at risk of facing a new military episode. It is therefore crucial to hear from Syrian political and civil society leaders on possible credible actions to be taken to protect civilians in Idlib as a matter of urgency.

5. Moving forward, the seventy-third session of the General Assembly should also provide an opportunity to recommit to a political solution to the Syria conflict, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including 2254 (2015), and the Geneva Communiqué, and to sustain the international response to the humanitarian and resilience needs of those affected by the crisis both inside Syria and across the region.

Format

6. The Arria formula meeting on the theme "Syrian voices on preventing a deathtrap in Idlib" will feature representatives of the Syrian Negotiation Commission and Syrian civil society, including Hadi al-Bahra, Bassma Kodmani, Fadwa Ojyli, Hind Kabawat and Bahjat Hajjar.

Media

7. The event will be webcast and open to the press. Participants and the audience will join the conversation using the social media hashtags #EyesOnIdlib, #Idlib and #WithSyria.